

Former Pharr police officer indicted on child sexual assault

BY LORENZO ZAZUETA-CASTRO STAFF WRITER | Posted: Wednesday, August 20, 2014

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PHARR — A grand jury indicted a former Pharr police officer late last month after he allegedly sexually assaulted an underage girl multiple times, according to court records.

Erasmio Mata Jr., 25, is accused of having sexual intercourse with a 17-year-old girl during work hours on five separate incidents from July to October 2013, records show.

Richard Alamia, attorney for the teen's family, had also said that other Pharr police officers watched Mata commit the sexual assaults and that the department attempted to cover up the case.

The family filed a lawsuit in May against the City of Pharr, its police department, chief and Mata, claiming that no criminal charges were ever brought against the officers who took the girl to abandoned homes throughout the city.

Alamia asked the Texas Rangers to conduct its own investigation into the allegations, which they discovered to be accurate. The Rangers then turned over the results to prosecutors, which presented the case to a grand jury that indicted Mata on July 30.

Pharr's city attorneys denied that other officers witnessed the sexual assaults, but an internal investigation did find that Mata engaged in misconduct with the victim, leading to his termination and a criminal case.

In the lawsuit, Alamia said that Pharr Police Chief Ruben Villescas met with the victim's family following the accusations and told them not to hire an attorney.

City attorneys previously said that they did not have enough information to confirm that claim.

Villescas could not be reached for comment.

Mata, whose arraignment is set for Sept. 3, has not yet hired a defense lawyer, court records show. If convicted of the first-degree felony, he faces between five and 99 years in prison.



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